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ABSTRACT

This paper rejects the view that the need to modify the status and role of minorities in educational research and development is of high priority. The need to modify this status is viewed as symptomatic of the problem of differential treatment of persons of color by American educational institutions. The problem which the American Educational Research Association (AERA) must address is institutionalized ethnocentrism as it is manifested in the inability of American educational institutions to effect equal outcomes for all students. Minority group children consistently score below the median on standardized verbal tests. Hispanics and blacks are underrepresented among college bound students, and among those receiving doctorates. Thus it could be expected that blacks and Hispanics would also be underrepresented in the research and development enterprise. Eight guidelines for AERA behavior and four courses of action are suggested to help AERA reduce institutional ethnocentrism in its own organization. The reduction of institutional ethnocentrism must become a high priority for AERA, and that priority must be reflected in its budget. (RLV)

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M E O W

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MODIFYING THE ROLE AND STATUS OF MINORITIES IN EDUCATIONAL R & D

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MEOW

JAMES A. JOHNSON, JR.*

I have been asked to share my thinking about the need to modify the role and status of "minorities"** in educational R and D. Upon examining this need, I find that it is not of high priority when compared with others. If the reader anticipates further discussion of the stated need, he or she should go no further. That is not the purpose of this paper. The purpose of this paper is to 1) present an alternative (and higher priority) need for consideration, 2) discuss that need as it manifests itself in American educational institutions, 3) discuss the AERA response to that need, and 4) put forward a suggested course of action.

The expressed need is, in my judgement, a symptom. The source of that symptom has many labels--classism, sexism, and ethnocentrism--to name a few. But, at its root, is the same thing--differential treatment of persons by American educational institutions. Thus, to seek to "modify" the role and status of "minorities" in educational R and D would be cosmetic and compensatory. If there is a difference between the symptom and the disease, then the wrong question has been put at issue.

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** To be consistent with the focus of this symposium, this paper limits itself to "minorities." The specific "minorities" discussed are Asians, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Blacks. It is recognized that comparable analyses of differential treatment toward men versus women and the affluent versus the poor could be presented.

It is my position that the problem that AERA must address is institutional ethnocentrism as it is manifested in the inability of American educational institutions to effect equal outcomes. This position assumes that the role and status of "minorities" in educational R and D is dependent on institutional behavior toward persons of color. My analyses of data suggest that this inability begins as early as first grade, and continues through the Ph.D. (and membership in AERA). The results of these analyses are presented below:

1. With respect to verbal (standardized test) scores, more than half of white students score at or above the median in both grade 1 (53.2%) and grade 12 (52.1%).

This is not the case with respect to any of the "minority" groups: Asians (46.5% vs 49.6%), Native Americans (47.8% vs 43.7%), Mexican Americans (46.5% vs. 43.7%), Puerto Ricans (44.9% vs 43.1%) and Blacks (45.4% vs. 40.9%). Thus, the inability of the schools to effect equal outcomes may be a function of ethnicity.*

This condition can be expected to be reflected in the pool of college bound high school seniors; and it is. This may be evidenced by comparing the percentages of groups in the total United States population with the percentages of college bound seniors by ethnic group.

In 1975 whites contributed 82.4 percent to the U.S. population but 87.1 percent to the college bound pool (an over-representation of 4.7 percent). Asians contributed 0.8 percent and 2.2 percent to the U.S. population and college bound pool; Hispanics (5.0 vs 1.1 percent) were under-represented by 3.9 percent; and Blacks (11.1 vs 8.2 percent) were under-represented by 2.9 percent.

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* It is of interest that language does not appear to explain this phenomenon. The vast majority of Blacks speak English. Yet, a greater percentage of students from Spanish speaking cultures, for example, score at or above the median (at grade 12) than do Black students. Related, is the finding that, in general, these groups may, in general, be ranked with respect to outcomes in descending order (as determined by skin color).

This phenomenon appears to be growing more critical. In 1968, for example, 2.7 percent of first year medical and law school students were Black. By 1974 the percentage contributed to first year medical and law school memberships by Black students had grown to 7.5 and 5.3 percent. While this was an improvement, a serious trend toward retrenchment, Black students only accounting for 6.7 and 4.9 percent, respectively, was evident three years later.

2. Thus, not only are America's elementary and secondary schools unable to effect equal outcomes of schooling in terms of test scores, they are unable to effect equal outcomes in the sort.

The question arises, then, as to the kinds of degree granting graduate schools that the youngsters of the various ethnic groups attend. Assuming that a doctorate granting institution is stronger than one that does not grant the doctorate a comparison is made between the percentages of the five groups in the enrollment of doctorate granting institutions of higher learning in 1973 and the percentages that each of the five groups contributed to the United States population in 1975.

When the comparison is made, it is, again, seen that whites and Asians were over-represented by 10.4 and 0.6 percent, respectively. Native Americans, Hispanics, and Blacks were under-represented by 0.1, 3.9 and 6.7 percent, respectively.

3. Higher education institutions, then, manifest this sickness by disproportionately screening prospective "minority" students out of the "stronger" institutions.

The next logical data to examine would seem to be associated with recipients of doctorate degrees by members of the various ethnic groups. Again discrepancies are clearly evident. Whites and Asians were over-represented by 11.2 and 0.3 percent respectively. However, Native Americans were over-represented by 0.1 percent while Hispanics and Blacks continued to be under-represented (3.9 and 7.4 percent, respectively). The difference between actual and

expected percentages of granted degrees for Asians, Native Americans, and Hispanics (when compared to whites) was not statistically meaningful. The difference between Blacks and whites (X^2=5.2792) was significant at the .05 level.

4. Agents of institutions of higher education are unable to effect equal outcomes of schooling when this is measured in terms of earned doctorate degrees.

Thus it could be expected that whites and Asians would be over-represented in the research and development enterprise. Hispanics and Blacks would be under-represented, and Native Americans would waver somewhere in between. One way to test this expectation is to look at the representation of these various minority groups in AERA. What, in fact, was the case was that over-representation on whites was reduced from 11.2 to 7.5 percent, while the over-representation of Asians increased from 0.3 to 1.8 percent. Native Americans remained at an over-representation of 0.1 percent with respect to membership to AERA. Hispanics remained under-represented by 3.9 percent. Blacks became more under-represented moving from an under-representation of 7.4 percent with respect to doctorates to an under-representation of 8.3 percent with respect to membership in AERA. Comparing the actual vs expected membership of the four "minority" groups with the white over-representation it is found that no significant differences exist between the whites and the "minorities" with the exception of Blacks. In that instance the difference was significant at the .05 level (X^2=5.28).

5. AERA has behaved in such a manner toward Hispanics and Blacks that it has been unable to effect expected representation of persons in these ethnic groups in its membership.

NIE has allocated considerable resources to the Nation's educational laboratories and centers in order to assuage the under-representation cited above. That practice is in need of examination because the managers and professionals in those institutions are overwhelmingly white. In 1976, for example,

whites were over-represented by 3.8 percent, and Asians by 1.3 percent. Native Americans contributed 0.4 percent to the population and 0.4 percent of the managers or professionals in those institutions were Native Americans. Hispanics were under-represented by 0.9 percent, and Blacks were under-represented by 4.3 percent.

6. The federal government has engaged in a practice of rewarding ethnocentric institutions for practicing ethnocentrism.

Laboratories and centers have a history of over-hiring whites and Asians and under-hiring Hispanics and Blacks. While it is not within the scope of this discussion to speculate as to why their hiring patterns are such that they are, it is relevant to this discussion to raise the question: Is there a more appropriate environment in which this sickness may be treated? I believe that there is.

7. AERA is in the position to engage in leadership, advocacy, the regulation of the profession, and the redistribution of resources in order to reverse the ethnocentric sickness that pervades American educational institutions.

What has been the AERA response. To my knowledge AERA has done what could be predicted. They have formed a committee, and they are holding this symposium. These are rational actions in response to an irrational situation and typical of actions taken by persons of the university culture to solve "real world" problems.

The committee* was formed by AERA's Executive Board in February of 1978 and was not given a "definitive charge." It did not meet until June of 1978. It was composed of three Blacks (two men), one white (man) and one Asian (man). A Black woman is the chairperson. During the period September through November, two additional persons were added--an Hispanic (woman) and a fourth Black (man). Thus, the committee now stands at seven: four Blacks, one white, one Hispanic, and one Asian. There are no Native Americans. Two members are women and five are men.

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* This section relies, heavily, on material provided in Dr. Tidwell's memo of January 2, 1979 (see attached).

The committee includes far too few women,* and no Native Americans. Hispanics are under-represented, and whites and Asians are over-represented. No people may have either a role or status that is comparable to those enjoyed by others in any institution if that people is not represented or grossly under-represented in that institution.

This same institutional behavior may be seen when one looks at the resources that AERA has allocated to the committee. These resources are in the order of magnitude of $2700 (or $33.33 per committee member per month). This level of support would seem to indicate that AERA is not even serious about the "wrong" question that it has posed.

This symposium reminds me of Piggy (Lord of the Flies) who at one point states "They'd meet and have tea and discuss. Then things 'ud be all right..." The problem as I see it will not be (and has not been) responsive to refereed papers, committee meetings, AERA symposium and the like. Ethnocentrism is not an intellectual problem. Rather, it is a problem that requires that institutional behavior toward persons of color (the poor, and women) be changed or modified. This cannot be accomplished, in my view, by meeting and discussing. This can only be accomplished, in this instance, by AERA taking the position that the making of decision about the role and status of persons of color by American educational institutions as a function of ethnicity is, in the words of Williams James,** the "moral equivalent of war."

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* In 1975 for every white female there were 2.46 white male members of AERA, 2.1 Asian males for every Asian female, two male Native Americans for every Native American female, two Hispanic males for each Hispanic female, and 1.7 Black male for every Black female. Thus, within ethnic groups, women are represented in AERA only half as frequently, on the average, as are males.

** "The Moral Equivalent of War," William James International Concilium, 1910.

How then should AERA behave toward ethnocentric institutional behavior?

It is suggested that any course of action taken by AERA be guided by the following:

1. The role and status of "minorities" in educational R and D is a function of ethnocentric institutional behavior toward persons of color.

2. It is not the role and status of "minorities" that is at issue. Rather, it is institutional behavior toward persons of color that is in need of "modification."

3. AERA must put the full weight of its prestige and prowess behind the "modification" of institutional behavior toward persons of color.

4. AERA must give this effort a high place on its agenda and the lion's share of its resources.

5. The mission of AERA must be rendered inclusive of "modifying" the behavior of American educational institutions toward persons of color.

6. AERA's goals and objectives in this area must be well formulated and developed, published, and acted on.

7. The process by which AERA approaches these goals and achieve these objectives must include, at a minimum, leadership, advocacy, the regulation of the profession, and the redistribution of resources.

8. The extent to which AERA is achieving these goals and objectives must be measured and published.

With these "guidelines" in mind, the following course of action is recommended:

1. AERA, a high prestige American Institution, must provide leadership.

This will require, among other things, an examination of the AERA mission, goals and objectives; the manner in which it allocates its resources; its organization and processes; the quality and complexion of its leadership; the orientation that it has come to have; its impact; and the extent to which it modifies its own behavior toward persons of color.

2. AERA must become a conspicuous and vocal advocate of persons of color who are being behaved toward ethnocentrically by American institutions.

The points of intervention discussed previously may serve as boundaries for this advocacy. These include a) the nature of the instructional programs (including curriculum, methodology, staff development, assessment and management) implemented by America's schools and why they result in unequal outcomes; b) the screening of persons of color out of the college bound pool; c) the proclivity of institutions of higher education to exercise authority rights in such a manner that unequal outcomes result; e) the fact that persons of color are under-represented in the AERA membership; and f) the practice of the federal government to reward ethnocentric institutions for practicing ethnocentrism.

Such advocacy may manifest itself in the Association's legislative program, interaction with other mainline interest groups, behavior toward such federal agencies as NIE and OE, publications, foci of regional and state AERA associations, testimony before congressional committees, etc.

3. AERA must become more effective in its role as regulator of the profession.

AERA must become more attuned to negative effects that the behavior of some of its members have on the undoing of institutional ethnocentism, and it must regulate that behavior.

4. AERA must redistribute its resources in such a manner that its resources contribute to the reduction of institutional ethnocentism.

The reduction of institutional ethnocentism must become a high AERA priority and that that priority must be reflected in its budget.

Effecting change in institutional behavior toward persons of color has always been difficult in this Country. However, AERA must stand for something. If it is business as usual, so be it. If it is justice, it is time for a change in perspective, mission, goals, and modus operandi. However, if AERA persists

in having the victims reach consensus on the "battle plan" and using symposia as the "battleground," it runs the risk of having its "war" labeled, in Russell Baker's terms, "MEOW."